Investigative Journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia Killed by Car Bomb

Maltese investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia has been murdered on 16 October 2017, around 3pm, by a car bomb in the town of Bidnija, near her family home. Daphne Caruana Galizia, 53, was known for her investigative journalism and her blog ‘Running Commentary’, which was one of the most widely read websites in Malta. In 2016, she was named by Politico as one of the “28 people who are shaping, shaking and stirring Europe”, after being the first to break news of Maltese politicians’ involvement in the Panama Papers scandal.

The journalist had been sued many times for her blog posts in which she revealed several alleged corruption scandals involving Maltese politicians. In February 2017, her bank accounts were frozen and libel suits were filed against her by Maltese Economy Minister and his consultant, following a report revealing that both men visited a brothel during an official trip in Germany.

According to media report, Daphne Caruana Galizia had filed a police report 15 days before her death saying she was being threatened.

NEW 30 Jul 2021: On 29 July 2021, the board of public inquiry into Daphne Caruana Galizia’s killing released its report. It concluded that the “state has to shoulder responsibility for the assassination”, as “it created an atmosphere of impunity, generated from the highest echelons of the administration inside Castille, the tentacles of which then spread to other institutions, such as the police and regulatory authorities, leading to a collapse in the rule of law”. The board issued a series of recommendations, addressing inter alia the protection of journalists and the right to receive and impart information.
On 23 February 2021, one of the defendants, Vincent Muscat, pleaded guilty of murder and other crimes related to the killing, and was sentenced to 15 years in prison, local media reported. Muscat renounced his right to appeal the sentence. On 24 February, police arrested and charged two additional suspects, Robert Agius and Jamie Vella, with complicity in the killing for allegedly supplying the bomb.

Early September 2020, the board of the public inquiry into Daphne Caruana Galizia’s killing was informed by the Maltese PM Robert Abela that he was granting a one-time extension of the deadline to 15 December 2020. A number of media freedom organisations, the family foundation as well as the PACE rapporteur criticised the decision to impose a time limit as ‘political interference’. In reaction to this, the inquiry board indicated that it intended to carry on with its work until ‘the proper fulfilment” of its terms of reference.

On 26 November 2019, Keith Schembri, the Maltese prime minister’s chief of staff and Konrad Mizzi, the country’s tourism minister, have resigned following the political turmoil surrounding the latest developments in the investigation into the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. On the same day, Economy Minister Chris Cardona announced he was "suspending himself with immediate effect from his position as minister, pending the investigations". Schembri’s resignation followed reports that Yorgen Fenech, the businessman arrested on 20 November in connection with the murder was preparing to make allegations against Schembri. According to media reports, Keith Schembri was taken to police headquarters for questioning in relation to the case, and police entered one of his properties. Mr Fenech was released on police bail without charge for the third time in a week on 26 November. He is seeking a pardon in exchange for further information about the crimes.

On 20 November 2019, Malta police arrested Yorgen Fenech, one of the country’s most prominent businessmen, as part of an investigation into the murder of
journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. Fenech was detained after his yacht was intercepted and searched.

18 Nov 2019: On 15 November 2019, the Government announced that two members of the public inquiry into the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia were replaced following the concerns about their impartiality raised by the late journalist’s family.

31 Oct 2019: On 31 October 2019, the partner organisations of the Platform decided to transfer this alert to the category of ‘impunity for murder’, based on their assessment of the lack of sufficient progress in the investigation of this case.

23 Sep 2019: On 20 September 2019, the Maltese government ordered a public inquiry into the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, following up on a June 2019 PACE resolution demanding the setting up of an independent public inquiry into her death within three months.

17 Jul 2019: On 16 July 2019, three suspects were formally charged over the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia. Brothers Alfred and George Degiorgio, as well as Vince Muscat, were arrested in December 2017. The public prosecutor now has 20 months to set a date for the trial.

12 Jul 2019: On 11 July 2019, at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s Global Media Freedom conference in London, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta Carmelo Abela, responding to the demand of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to set up an independent public inquiry into the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, confirmed that the government will open such an inquiry within the next three months.

06 Dec 2017: On 4 December 2017 the Maltese police arrested ten suspects over the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia. On 5 December, three of them were charged with the journalist’s murder, as well as with criminal use of explosives, being involved in organised crime, and criminal conspiracy.

Article published by the Guardian: "Three charged in Malta with murder of Panama Papers journalist"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Letter of the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions/UN Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights/UN Special Rapporteur on the
On 8 December 2020, PACE’s Legal Affairs Committee endorsed a follow-up report to the recommendations on achieving justice for Daphne Caruana Galizia made by the Assembly in Resolution 2293. The Committee concluded that the implementation of the recommendations remain “fundamentally unsatisfactory, with no final results”. It also called on the Maltese authorities to take the measures identified in the follow-up report to fully implement Resolution 2293 “as a matter of urgency”.

- Statement by PACE’s Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights: "Malta’s response to Assembly demands on Daphne’s assassination and the rule of law ‘unsatisfactory’"
- Report on follow-up to Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2293 (2019)
- Video statement by Pieter Omtzigt
09 Oct 2020 | PACE Rapporteur expresses "serious concern" about the possibility to set a time limit to the public inquiry into the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia.

- First letter from Pieter Omtzigt to the Prime Minister
- Second letter from Pieter Omtzigt to the Prime Minister

02 Dec 2019 | OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media welcomes new indictment in murder case of Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia

- Statement by Harlem Désir

29 Nov 2019 | Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights urges the Maltese government to ensure the independence of the investigation into the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia

- Commissioner's letter addressed to the Prime Minister of Malta
- Reply of Owen Bonnici, Minister of Justice, Culture and Local Government of Malta

17 Oct 2019 | “The Government of Malta remains far behind in its obligation to ensure that investigations in the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia are conducted in a prompt, effective, independent and impartial manner” said Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression and UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on the occasion of the anniversary of the journalist's murder.

- Joint statement

04 Oct 2019 | PACE Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights invites the Maltese authorities to address the issues raised by Rapporteur Pieter Omtzigt concerning the terms of reference for the independent public inquiry as a matter of urgency.

- Declaration of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

04 Oct 2019 | PACE Rapporteur considers that "Daphne Caruana Galizia inquiry in Malta ‘does not meet the Assembly’s expectations’ ". Statement by Pieter Omtzigt

- Statement by Pieter Omtzigt

23 Sep 2019 | PACE rapporteur on the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia and the rule of law in Malta welcomes decision to set up inquiry into the
assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia.

🔗 Statement by Pieter Omtzigt

### 23 Sep 2019

Public inquiry into death of Daphne Caruana Galizia in Malta must be fully independent and yield justice, states OSCE Media Freedom Representative.

🔗 Statement by Harlem Désir

### 27 Jun 2019

On 26 June 2019, PACE adopted the resolution on Daphne Caruana Galizia's assassination and demanded the setting up of an independent public inquiry into her death within three months.

🔗 Resolution n° 2293 “Daphne Caruana Galizia's assassination and the rule of law, in Malta and beyond: ensuring that the whole truth emerges”

🔗 Report by Pieter Omtzigt on the investigation into the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia and the rule of law in Malta

### 27 Jun 2018

Pieter Omtzigt, who is preparing a report for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on the investigation into the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia and the rule of law in Malta, has been authorised by PACE’s Legal Affairs Committee to receive information from anonymous sources and to protect the identity of anyone who provides such information.

🔗 Rapporteur seeks anonymous information on Daphne Caruana Galizia murder

### 24 Apr 2018

PACE to monitor investigation into the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia

🔗 PACE statement

### 25 Jan 2018

PACE adopts a motion for a resolution 'Daphne Caruana Galizia's assassination and the rule of law, in Malta and beyond: ensuring that the whole truth emerges'

🔗 Texte of motion Doc. 14479

### 25 Jan 2018

PACE appointed General Rapporteur on Media Freedom & the protection of journalists will make his first inquiry into the murder of Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.

🔗 Tweet by Georges Foulkes

### 18 Oct 2017

APCE president strongly condemns the murder of Maltese journalist
Shocked by the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, the Commissioner for Human Rights calls on authorities to thoroughly investigate the case.

CoE Secretary General appalled by the brutal death of Maltese journalist and blogger Daphne Caruana Galizia, in a car bombing, calls for a thorough investigation to find those responsible for her death.

OSCE media freedom representative outraged by killing of prominent journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia in Malta, urges thorough investigation.

**RELEVANT COE INSTRUMENTS**

- **Resolution by the Parliamentary Assembly**
  - Resolution 2293 "Daphne Caruana Galizia’s assassination and the rule of law in Malta and beyond: ensuring that the whole truth emerges"
  
- **Introductory memorandum by the Parliamentary Assembly**
  - Daphne Caruana Galizia’s assassination and the rule of law, in Malta and beyond: ensuring that the whole truth emerges

**DISCLAIMER** This section presents a non-exhaustive selection of CoE instruments and ECHR case-law. This information is not a legal assessment of the alert and should not be treated or used as such.

**FREELANCERS**

**Key information**:

Daphne Caruana Galizia

Independent Journalist and Blogger, known for her reporting on corruption and the political situation in Malta. Her blog "Running Commentary" was one of the most visited websites in the country.